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SUBJECT: THIS, TOO, IS LIBERIA: FEBRUARY 25, 2010

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[11](#). (U) This round-up cable, named after a popular daily feature in a local newspaper, covers the following topics:

--DEATH OF ADOPTED LIBERIAN ELICITS STRONG REACTION
--TSA CONDUCTS FINAL PRE-ASSESSMENT MISSION
--TONY BLAIR ADVISES PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
--NEW HEAD OF FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY APPOINTED
--SPRAYING FOR CONTROL OF MALARIA
--PRIVATE U.S. PHILANTHROPISTS VISIT LIBERIA

[12](#). (SBU) DEATH OF ADOPTED LIBERIAN ELICITS STRONG REACTION: News reports about the murder of an adopted Liberian girl in California by her adoptive parents have provoked a public condemnation of the incident by the GOL. The statement was interesting for having included continued support for international adoption in spite of this tragedy. Press reports spanned several days, citing outrage from the GOL. The consular section has been working with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) officials since September 2009 to review current adoption cases in order to allow on-going cases that have been held up to be processed. Members of the GOL's Ad-hoc adoption committee have told conoff that the GOL is still committed to inter-country adoptions but that they would like more information on how such an unfortunate situation could have come about. In light of this incident they were clear that there would be no new cases (those without full and final adoptions) approved until the revised law on adoptions is passed and implemented.

[13](#). (SBU) TSA CONDUCTS FINAL PRE-ASSESSMENT MISSION: The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) ASSIST team visited Liberia February 15-18 to provide technical assistance to address deficiencies in aviation safety and security in advance of a full assessment scheduled for March 22-26. Next month's assessment will determine whether Roberts International Airport can support direct flights from the U.S., but TSA continues to find GOL commitment lacking. TSA repeatedly urged the Liberia Civil Aviation Authority (LCAA) to improve employee screening, produce and disseminate a national employees training program and mend holes in the airport's perimeter fence over several monthly visits. TSA observed that the LCAA has yet to make any progress on any of these International Civil Aviation Organization standards. All are pre-requisites for direct flights.

14. (SBU) TONY BLAIR ADVISES PRESIDENT'S OFFICE: Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited Monrovia February 22-23 to launch a new African Governance Initiative (AGI) project aimed at building capacity in President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's Executive Mansion. In a February 23 meeting with Ambassador, Blair explained that the AGI assistance to the president's office will focus on limiting priorities, and building staff efficiency, organization and communication skills. Blair said the Executive Mansion's ostensible "400 priorities" should be limited to four: providing electricity, building roads, rebuilding the Port of Monrovia, and providing jobs. Blair told the Ambassador that the Executive Mansion had good staff, but they are only one-to-two deep. Blair's foundation will assist staff to better schedule President Sirleaf's time, mostly by restricting appointments, but President Sirleaf needs to give them more decision-making authority. Blair and the Ambassador agreed that a more proactive communication strategy by the GOL, including better use of newspapers and radio stations, is an important plank in the strategy. President Sirleaf will appoint presidential advisor Patrick Sendolo to head a "Delivery Unit" to work with the Foundation and ensure progress. Funding for this assistance will be provided by Blair's foundation and the Soros Foundation.

15. (U) NEW HEAD OF FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY APPOINTED: President Sirleaf has nominated Manager for Community Forestry Moses Wogbeh to replace John Woods as the new Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA). Under Woods' leadership, the FDA struggled to create a forestry sector that balanced community

rights, sustainable forest management practices, and the need to generate revenue from commercial forestry. Wogbeh's background in community forestry and his strong working relationship with the U.S. Forest Service through USAID could signal an inclination to readjust the balance between commercial forestry and conservation, while his 24-year tenure at the FDA and alliance with a static "old guard" culture at that agency may prompt him to continue the policies of his predecessor. Wogbeh's nomination is pending approval by the National Legislature.

16. (U) SPRAYING FOR CONTROL OF MALARIA: After an intensive review of scientific studies and test results conducted in Liberia, the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare (MOHSW) agreed this week with the President's Malaria Initiative on the insecticides to be used in future household spraying activities. DDT was considered, but the MOHSW agreed with USAID technical team recommendations that the class of chemicals known as pyrethroids was the best choice for Liberia. This should allow the indoor residual spray program to move ahead with plans to spray 50,000 households in the coming four months, enough to protect 300,000 Liberians from malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

17. (U) PRIVATE U.S. PHILANTHROPISTS VISIT LIBERIA:

The Ambassador and USAID staff met with two visiting health education teams on February 17. A team from the University of Duquesne (PA) is interested in exploring student and faculty exchanges to further health education in both countries, and a team from Hospitals of Hope is providing technical equipment and other services to Liberian hospitals. The Duquesne group explained that a private philanthropist is supporting efforts to bring U.S. health care providers to Liberia in exchange for study tours to the University Hospital and clinics for promising Liberian students, as well as technical expertise to increase lighting, energy efficiency and improve safety. Hospitals of Hope wants to expand its assistance and bring badly needed diagnostic and other medical equipment to selected Liberian facilities. The Ambassador emphasized the huge need for health technology following the destructive civil conflict and the importance of close collaboration with the Ministry of Health. USAID offered its network of contacts and technical assessments as contributions to their commendable efforts.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD